

# EAST RIVER TUNNEL.

EXTRACTS FROM REPORT OF ALDERMEN FITSZIMMONS,  
CONKLING AND STORM.

The Committee have held weekly public sessions for two months, mainly devoted to this subject, and have especially invited any citizens opposed to it to present their objections.

No objection on public or private grounds has been offered and the public and press have uniformly commended the measure.

Cities that grow unfettered by physical limitations, spreading in all directions from a business centre, take, naturally, the circular form, and their areas increase so rapidly, as the radius extends, that, with modern facilities of transit, no serious congestion of population is possible.

Of such cities London is a conspicuous example, and as New York expects to rival that city as the "World's Metropolis," the comparison of their respective conditions as to room for growth is of the highest importance.

New York is peculiar among the great cities of the whole world, in that its development is purely linear. Instead of the available space increasing as the square of the distance from the centre, or even increasing directly as the distance, the increment of area rather grows less as the distance increases.

Within a radius of nine miles New York has 17.4 and London 254.5 square miles of area, a ratio of fifteen to one, London can therefore, house thirty millions of people within that radius as comfortably as New York can two millions.

Under these conditions very grave evils, which have been and will continue to be serious impediments to the growth of the city, have arisen in New York. The magnificent harbor and water ways which have made it the great city that it is have not been wholly unmixed blessings, since they have forbidden a natural mode of growth. Rents and land values are very high; living expenses are high; in the sections inhabited by the poor, who must constitute the vast majority of every great city, a terrific congestion of population has resulted, far greater than exists on a large scale in any other civilized city.

The whole eastern third of the city beyond the Bowery and Third Avenue, a few cases excepted, is one vast and squalid tenement region, crowded to suffocation with human beings, and a breeding place of wretchedness and crime.

In spite of the fact that in every commercial or manufacturing establishment every one, from the manager to the office boy, must earn more and live worse than he would anywhere else for the money, New York grows rapidly, but its growth will never be as fast nor as great as if these disadvantages were remedied without sacrifice of its unique and unequalled advantages as a commercial metropolis, which have made it what it is. The one way to do this is to extend the residence area, which can only be done effectually by the practical elimination of the East River as an obstacle to quick and cheap transit.

New York will then for the first time have a healthy, unimpeded growth.

The disproportionate expense of doing business of any kind in New York will consequently disappear, leaving the advantages of doing so unchanged. Hence manufacturing especially will be greatly stimulated, and many other kinds of business which now avoid New York, if possible, will gradually centre here.

Besides the provision of room for growth, we must look also to the causes and means of growth.

It cannot be doubted that the phenomenal growth of New York heretofore has been due to the rapid increase of its inland communications. That increase is now suspended. No more trunk lines of railway are likely to be built for many years and no canals at any time. We must look therefore either to new local facilities for commerce or to the local development of manufactures for any continuance of the present rate of increase in business and population.

The present expenditure for moving goods on wagons in this city is stated at *one hundred millions of dollars per annum*, a tax on living and business which, together with the high cost of storage, is already beginning to drive commerce away.

As an instance, New England and Southern products are being carried around New York by a single line of transportation to the amount of five millions of tons annually, whereas, with cheap storage and handling a great part of these goods would be received, sold and distributed here.

It is claimed that the present project will test and probably develop the practicability not only of underground transit but of underground exchange and storage of goods at a great saving in cost, and its advocates say that "among the natural advantages which

Mayor Hewitt declares 'assure to this city its imperial destiny as the greatest in the world,' one of the chief may be the rock foundation, which permits the building of another city under it for its railroads and storehouses."

The cost of storage chambers in the rock is estimated at less than one third that of equal space in buildings above ground.

In the development of manufactures, which has already taken great strides, it only needs cheap homes and cheap food added to the present advantages of New York to make this the manufacturing as fully as it is the commercial centre of the country—and these can both be found in abundance on the other side of the East River.

It is admitted by common consent that tunneling is preferable to bridging: 1st, in economy of construction and maintenance, permitting lower rates of fare; 2d, in the absence of obstructive approaches; 3d, in making better connections with freight and passenger lines on either side of the river.

Residents over the Bergen tunnel have no knowledge of the passage of trains beneath them at a depth corresponding to that of the proposed railroad here.

The popular interest in this improvement is shown by the multitude of petitioners in its favor, some twenty thousand in all, and the presence of representatives of many organized societies for its advocacy before this Committee.

The suggestion that the interests of the "Annexed District" are opposed to any improvement in its transit across the East River is derided by citizens of that district themselves who maintain that their higher interests are in the growth and welfare of the city as a whole, and therefore in the free and natural expansion necessary to that growth and welfare.

Upon the subject of *cheap food*—when we see the coarsest products of Long Island farms hauled on wagons a distance of twenty-five to thirty miles to this market (a thing unparalleled anywhere in this country) and involving a cost greater than the first cost of raising these products or that of transporting them across the Atlantic, and see the fertilizing material that should go to enrich those farms and cheapen their products carried out to pollute the waters and shores of our seaside resorts, no other argument is needed to show the importance of a direct railway connection between those farms and our markets.

With such connection every foot of Long Island would soon be a garden for New York. The produce would be delivered on cars in markets throughout the city and sold from those cars, thus reducing its cost to the consumer, improving its condition, and relieving the overcrowded streets of the market wagons.

With such connection moreover, quick transit from New York to the seaside will be secured and the resorts on the Long Island coast built up in preference to those of New Jersey; the whole Island will prosper and since it is entirely tributary to New York its prosperity is our prosperity. This construction will be especially valuable as an experiment in underground transit, and not the slightest obstacle to the proposed north and south lines of underground roads, since all lines east of Tenth Avenue will easily pass over it and a Tenth Avenue line would readily pass under it.

Reviewing the whole subject and considering the great and immediate benefit to come from the expenditure of millions of dollars for labor in our midst, and the definite financial advantages secured to the city, only the most substantial objection would justify this Board in refusing its consent to the undertaking, and since every consideration of justice and humanity toward those who deserve the highest consideration at our hands, the classes by whose unceasing toil the city lives and grows, combines with every dictate of business prudence and foresight, in demanding this measure of relief it is clear that no greater opportunity of beneficent action was ever offered to this Board.

Its favorable verdict will "mark out a wise, broad and liberal policy for the future, and inaugurate a new era of growth and prosperity. With cheap homes and cheap food for the toilers and cheap handling and storage for the products of toil, we shall so supplement our natural advantages that our children, if not ourselves, may see New York indeed the 'metropolis of the world.'

April 6th, 1888.

GEN. ROY STONE,

MY DEAR SIR:—The Chancel of our church is, I believe, built directly over the Erie Railway Tunnel and we are not in the slightest degree disturbed by the passage of trains. In fact I have never detected from noise or any other cause, while in church, that trains did pass through the tunnel, and yet it must be that they have, during the time of service, for our services, particularly during Lent, are held with great frequency.

Yours very sincerely,

GEORGE P. HEBBARD,  
Rector.

HOLY TRINITY CHURCH,  
Jersey City Heights.

This statement is confirmed by letters from U. S. Senator McPherson and Judges Beach and Aldrich of Jersey City. The tunnel tracks are 75 feet below the surface.